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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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Committees:
Government Oversight
Education
and the
Workforce

May 17, 1999

Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061
Rockville, Maryland 20852

RE: Docket No. 98N-1038, Irradiation in the Production, Processing, and Handling of Food

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to urge you to extend the comment period for this Docket past the current end date of May 18, 1999. I would also like express my support for the recommendation by the Center for Science in the Public Interest regarding labeling of irradiated foods.

Despite the fact that the FDA has determined that radiation is safe for food, many consumers do not want to eat foods treated with radiation. Radiation changes the texture, taste, nutritional value, and chemical composition of foods. It also creates a new class of byproducts that have not been tested for their possible carcinogenic and other long-term effects on humans.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest recommends that "any foods, or any foods containing ingredients that have been treated by irradiation, should be labeled with a written statement on the principal display panel indicating such treatment. The statement should be easy to read and placed in close proximity to the name of the food and accompanied by the international symbol. If the food is unpackaged, this information should be clearly displayed on a poster in plain view and adjacent to where the product is displayed for sale."

Like other labels, irradiation labels are required by the FDA to be truthful and not misleading. I believe that the terms "treated with radiation" or "treated by irradiation" should be retained. Any phrase involving the word "pasteurization" is misleading because pasteurization is an entirely different process of rapid heating and cooling.

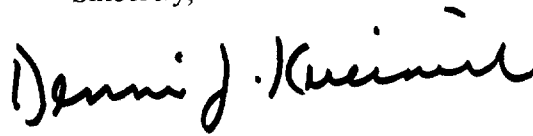
The requirement for irradiation disclosure (both label and radura) should not expire at any time in the future. The material fact of processing remains. Even if some consumers become familiar with the radura, new consumers (e.g. young people, immigrants) will not be. The symbol should be clearly understandable at the point of purchase for everyone. If there is no label, consumers will be misled into believing the food has not been irradiated.

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Once again, I believe more time is needed to allow consumers to comment on this issue and urge you to extend the deadline.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dennis J. Kucinich". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "D".

Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress

DJK:jj

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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